

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 2004

Dear Seniors,

As you checked your mailboxes last month, many of you may have received a mailing from the AARP asking you to sign a petition to your Senators and Representative urging them to act in the best interest of older Americans. However, over the past weeks, I have heard from thousands of seniors in my district who are dismayed that the AARP chose not to act in the best interest of the millions of seniors the organization represents, when it endorsed appalling partisan Medicare legislation recently pushed through Congress.

I found it odd that AARP President William Novelli would have the temerity to issue such material just after he abandoned the clearly expressed needs of member seniors by supporting a Medicare bill that failed to meet criteria he himself had earlier set. It is bordering on unconscionable that his national board would—arguably for financial gain of AARP's insurance interests—decide to speak favorably on a bill that not only failed to do anything to bring prescription prices down, but actually stopped reimportation and directed the Secretary of Health and Human Services specifically not to negotiate lower prices!

What made the AARP endorsement even more shocking was the degree to which the organization blatantly disregarded its own demands made during the summer of 2003, when the legislation was originally under consideration by the House and Senate. On July 14th, members of Congress received a letter from AARP President Novelli in which he expressed nine areas of concern with the pending legislation and urged Congress to make it better. "If, however, the final conference agreement does more harm than good, based on the concerns enumerated in this letter," Mr. Novelli wrote, "we will not hesitate to oppose it." Not one area that the AARP addressed in their July letter was corrected in the final conference report. Yet Mr. Novelli contradicted his earlier promise to oppose it on behalf of seniors.

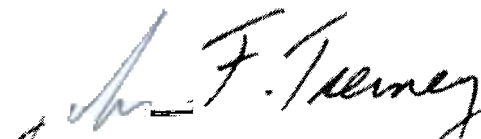
Here are a just two of at least nine examples pulled directly from AARP's letter:

- ❖ On the issue of **maintaining current coverage**, AARP said, "*AARP strongly believes that a conference agreement should not result in millions of older and disabled Americans losing their employer-provided prescription drug coverage.*" **The new law still causes millions of seniors to lose their retiree health coverage, including an estimated 62,000 seniors in Massachusetts.**

On the issue of **cost containment**, AARP said, "In order to assure the continued affordability of the benefit for both beneficiaries and the Medicare program, greater efforts are needed to put downward pressure on health care costs, particularly the price of prescription drugs. **The new law weakens prescription drug cost containment, eviscerates reimportation and caps the Medicare Trust Fund.**

Nearly 300 organizations that represent more than 20 million Americans did not agree with the AARP, and I joined them in opposition to the bill. Mass Senior Action was one of those organizations, calling the bill a "step backwards" for seniors in the Commonwealth. In the future, I hope AARP will work with, not against, its members and all seniors in urging Congress to strengthen programs for older Americans.

Sincerely,



John F. Tierney
Member of Congress